



ILLUSTRATIONS

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Carrie Vaccaro
Sheri Valencia
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W. N. B.
Archives



"What voyage this, little girl?

This coming out of prison?"

— Anne Sexton
from Transformations

1976

B. OFFERTMAN

A SONNET : REBIRTH OF A SEASON

Once more the endless cycle takes its course,
And crushes cold, bare winter in its rush;
Renewed, the sounds of men bear no remorse,
At last, the green has kissed the ground and brush;
Like lace it dresses each awaiting branch,
And scattered through the green, a bright array
From nature's palette, brilliant colors dance:
Spring like a restless child begins its play;
But deep within these walls I feel no mirth,
And time, that thief, already has my youth,
Why must confusion cloud this fair rebirth?
How long a quest must I pursue for truth?
Just as each spring fills hearts with hope and cheer
I must grow wiser with each passing year.

— Jeanne DeLeo



Shanta quil'ya
cantos
Lea shu-la
sillia
Calli--la

La calli,
La calli
shanta Ma ja
Quil'ya

Quil'ya
Couru
La!!

Santos
Santos
Santos

Ma ja
Ma ja
Ma ja

Singing all day long
in the Mid-day Sun
Singing of Travels
of Sorrows
of Joys
Singing all day
in the hot balmy air
Singing,
as clouds rumble on.

O Native Son
under sky so blue
Sing of your Native Land
embalming your soul
with ork's healing oils
Sing, in the Mid-day Sun.

Sing my good man
and travel on
Work is your Source of Life
Carrying you to distant lands
Sing with a heart made light.

Singing all day
in hot white sun
Calling to sparrows, to magpies, to crows
Singing like birds flying free overhead
Singing in rhythm
in wisdom
in time

African Sun melts troubles away

Cantos
quil'ya
La!!



AFRICAN WORK SONG



—Vicki VanTassel

THE BLOOD LEAF

The blood drips slowly from the womb. Drop by drop it descends through the passage way that the shooting sperm hungrily swirls thru in search of the now departing egg.

Bodily functions force it through the tangled forest of hair into a toilet bowl of aqua, onto a napkin called sanitary, or worst of all, it becomes part of a cork called tam pon or pax.

Sometimes, accidentally, it forces itself past these barriers and meanders down fleshy thighs, making an intricate pattern of lacey delicate lines. The hot red web of blood, even though it carries dead sperm, causes in its wake, a soft swelling in the belly, a tenderness in the breasts, just as though there had been the beginnings of births end.

Is the need for more affection, and the yearning for the intimacy of making love, to fill the void felt by this cyclic loss.

One warm, sticky, life giving fluid in exchange for another. As one flows to the outside, the need to receive the other becomes intense.

—Susan Adams

consistent droning of insects
slices the soden saturated sfumato air
laden with heavy midsummer scents
green snappy trees and black-eyed susans

stagnant sluggish afternoons

stable slackened wind rests in quietude
weighted boughs of weeping willows
encumbered with tepid humidity
lay lethargically upon the ground
listless languid limbs

in the backyard

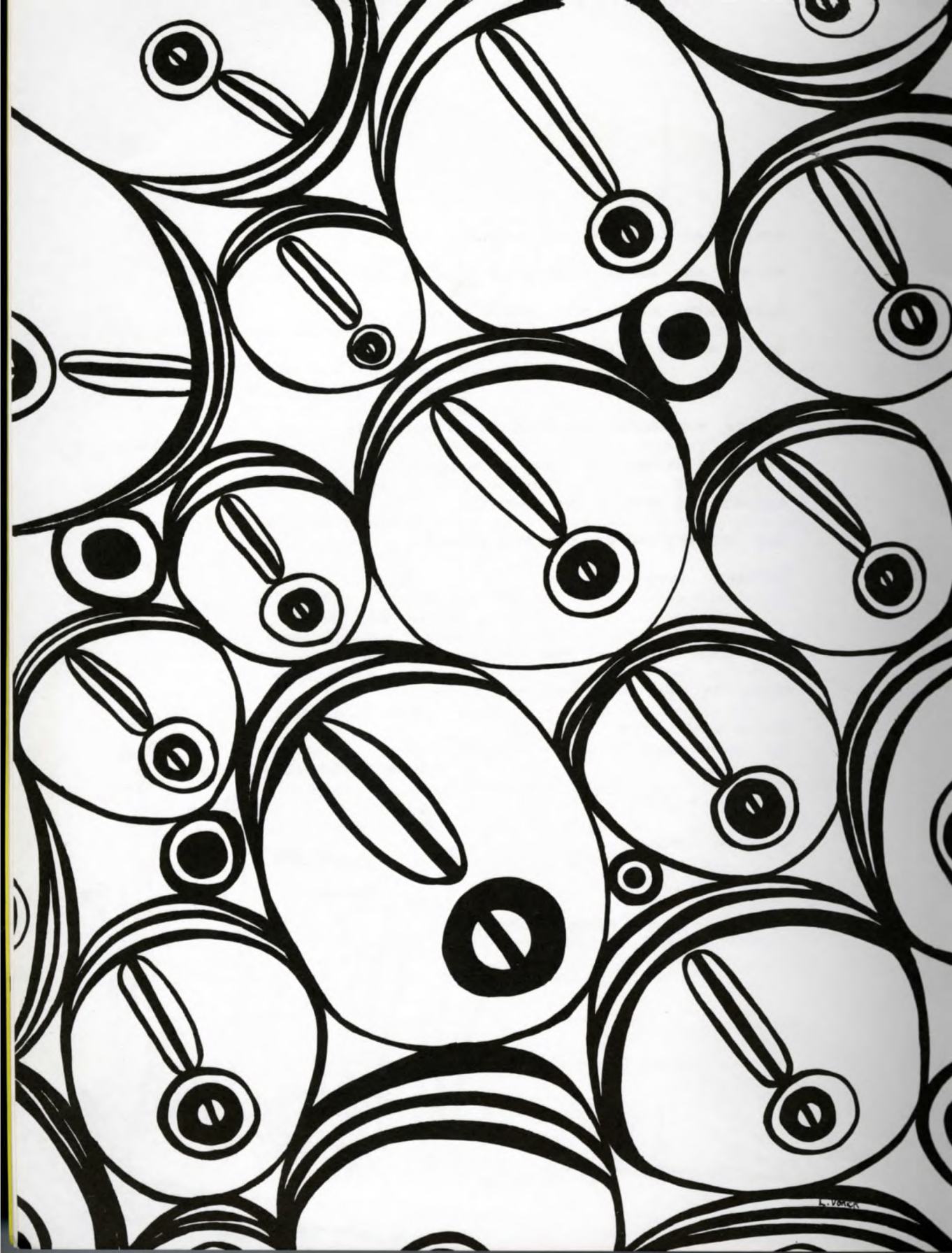
She stops short of the kitchen door
stooping low to gather scattered
children's toys

pressed tightly
between shadows
in my heart.

a subtle silhouette

—Carole A. Shortt



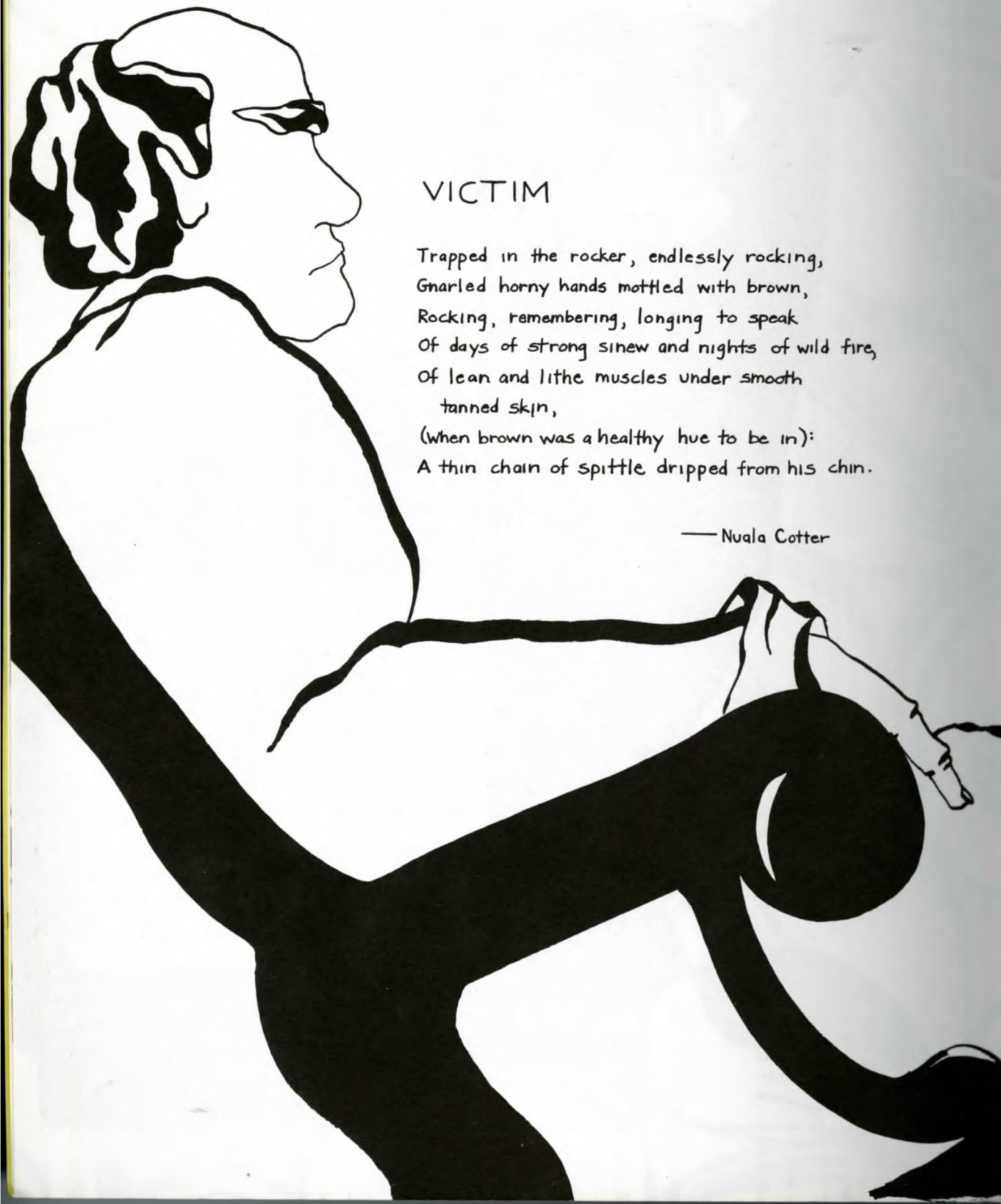


PORTRAIT OF A
SIAMESE GENT

—Nuala Cotter

Mean Blue eyes in a seal-brown mask
Calculate the odds,
While prideful tail is tucked around
Dapper tux and four brushed boots

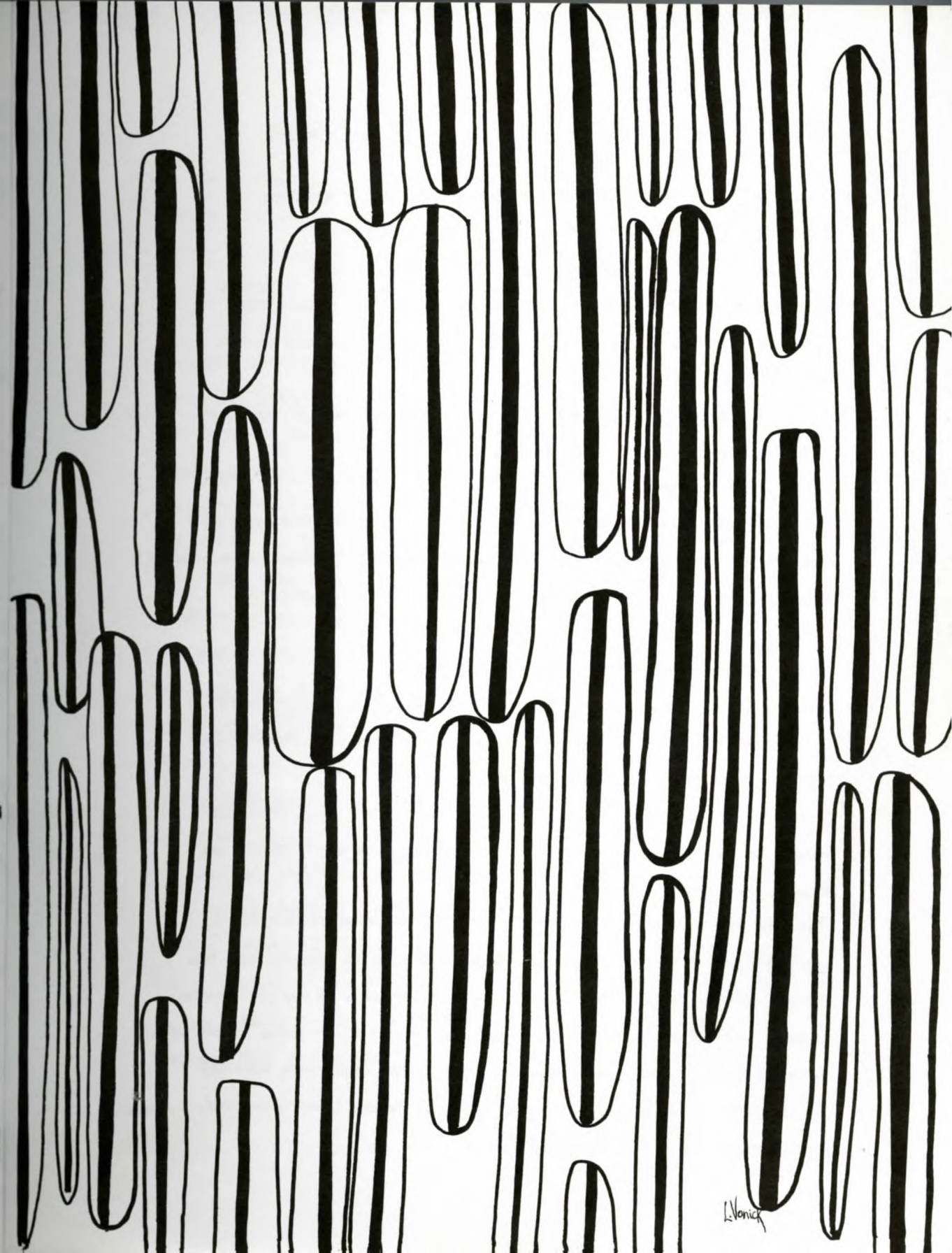
Two large ears for screening skitters
of furry varmints in the walls,
One pink rough tongue to preen and prime
His glory when the slaughter's done.



VICTIM

Trapped in the rocker, endlessly rocking,
Gnarled horny hands mottled with brown,
Rocking, remembering, longing to speak
Of days of strong sinew and nights of wild fire,
Of lean and lithe muscles under smooth
tanned skin,
(When brown was a healthy hue to be in):
A thin chain of spittle dripped from his chin.

— Nuala Cotter



TESTIMONY OF A BEGGAR

"Twice," she said, "I told you of phantoms, and shadows, of seamless silhouettes, but you said I would be refused admission."

I smiled. What else could I do. How else could I respond.

"Your smile will be walled in. Enclosed in some gulf of madness.

Creating a dialogue with a lipless virgin who will howl and shriek at your most intimate caress."

There is something in the lady that is discernible. Worth further investigation. Worth at least a try.

"Are you a Scorpio?" I queried.

"No puedo mas! No puedo mas! Some satonic magic in your eyes lulls me into secret dominions of grace and majesty. Domains where song takes and gives odour. Fragrances of your divine mystery.

I'm going at this all wrong, I thought.

"Your mind fascinates me," I crooned.

"Your mind is a misnomer," the lady, so dark, and fine, retorted.

I almost fell off my chair! Was this dame trying to short-circuit me, or was she easily, definably, mad!

She twisted her face into a grin, undulated her hips, and rose her hands, dropping them again in disgust, and supplication to some unknown and unwanted deity.

"The pain of my image in the mirror, the illumination of Jonah. I can not tear it loose. I can not want, or dream, or clearly see the vapors of my shadowed heart. The dark symbol of my pain. The unknown symbol of my God. It lingers, lurks, drifts in some twisted dream. Misfit. I, you, am. I am a misfit. Driven logic with no rest. Misbegotten child of wisdom with graceful hands. Luxurious mind, accompanied by a well shaped body.

It felt as if someone had driven a knife into my side. There was a logic to this twisted soul. I felt something, I'm not sure what, for her. I had not felt for a woman in such a long time. Suddenly I was involved in something I was not sure I wanted to be involved in. I was involved with someone I knew I should stay clear of. She reached over and touched my arm lightly. I quivered, went light inside. My heart raced.

"You want me, don't you?" She knew I wanted her. Wanted someone, anyone, to love me, to hold me, to take me with them, somewhere; anywhere. Always away from where I was, now, here, there, anywhere; but how did she know this? Fear flooded my mind. Was I being taken for a ride? What did she really want? Fear. I can't live in fear of others forever. Maybe she was just lonely, like myself. Maybe she just wanted some tenderness. Someone to take her away from here. Home. My home. She reached over, put her arms around my waist, and kissed me gently on my lips.

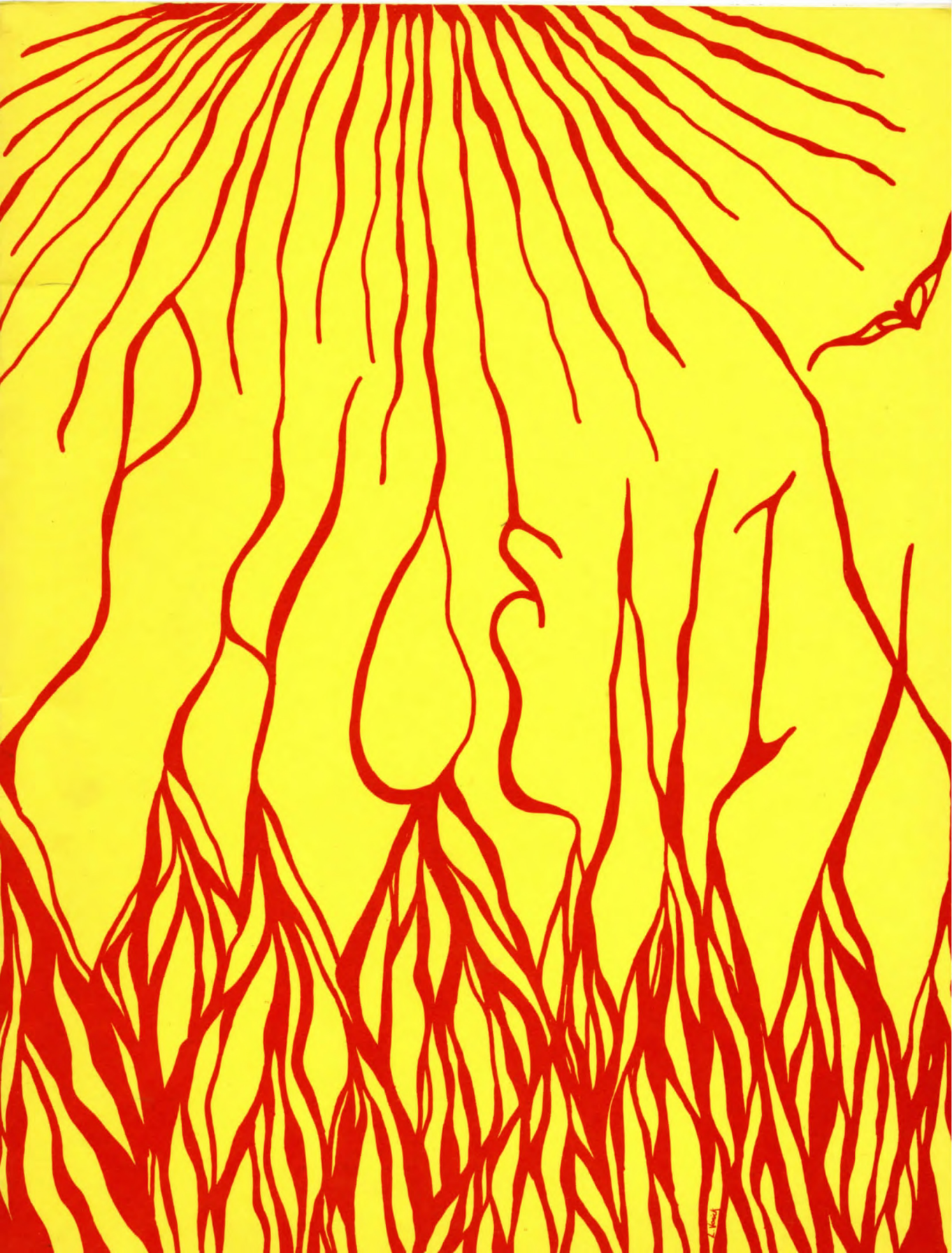
"Take me home," she whispered. The kiss and her whisper merged, congealing with the noise of the room. I felt my heart open to her. I felt myself lapse out to touch her. I felt my fingers play across her neck, her cheek, her shoulder. Then, suddenly, she turned away from me. She began to talk to a man sitting to the right of her.

"Twice," she said, "I told you of phantoms, and shadows, of seamless silhouettes..." I did not have to listen to the rest. I fingered the midnight special in my pocket, realized in a flash of anger, and pain that it was not worth it, and walked out.

— Anonymous



scre
fire-sc
skies sca
bold, blaz
exploding
O'omnipotent
RED
LI



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"What voyage this, little girl?

This coming out of prison?"

— Anne Sexton
from Transformations

ATHENA: THE WOMAN

this fire only smolders
in grey damp decay
empty smoke

like desolate november stratus hangs
smothers my soul; feeding Apollyon as his
hollow laugh echoes about my life
burning in sparks of light-flashed blue
and painting purest oranges into purest reds

oh

into this pit

this soul, echoes of distant fires set
rhythm to the rage
rhythm to a rage that only smolders

—Theresa Maier

R. Maier



I think about you
Whenever I am lonely
Seems a strange time
Seagulls overhead-screaming
Tossing in bed-crying
Yes- seems strange.

—Robin Metz

DESTINY OF A SHADOW

my hands
reach towards me from reflections
in this bar I always come here

in search of something (one)

only find golden floating ice shimmers
in red smoked light and like all cynics I
wear a casual smile and pretend distinction
ice melts blurs my scotch

metamorphosis to the quarter eater
drinking smoking swaying organs of
sterile sex wearing naked masked that
were never meant to hide the unique anonymity
in the caverns of greying now decaying ganglia.

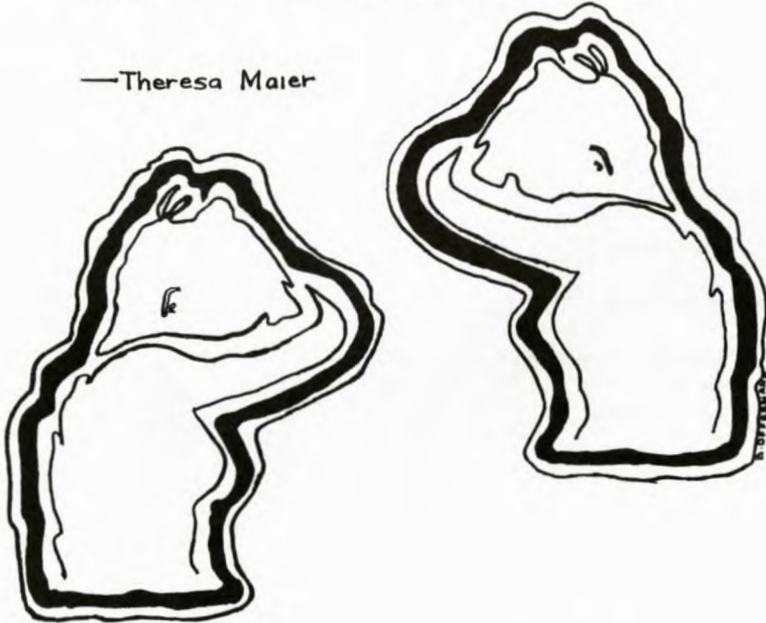
"my heart aches...and a drabsy numbness pains
my sense.....dull opiate"

I barely recognize my own reflection in
the rebounds of the masked impressions.
Vacuous faces stagger with wilted kisses

my soul
reaches towards me from reflections
in this bar I always leave here

without reason to search for something (one)

—Theresa Maier





when you are of shadows
no season do you call your own
only reflections
of interludes you wished for
 strange sawdust fancies
 you claw at
you in sunlight
analyze me not
but take my dimensions
 as they are

—Sheri Valencia



S. OFFERMANN

POSITIVE FEELINGS

Mists of anger against the windowpane.

Tears

in

tan-

dem

Blanch unyielding cheeks.

Screams

-Echo

-Echo

-Echo

Lips move

Incessantly

Feeding on fury.

Fury!

Incarcerates the soul

And poisons the living

Unseeing eyes

Ache with hate

Eyes,

Shadowed by clouds of wrath — Pitiless.

Crumble life!

I care not now.

I will dance no more

To your tune's despair!



—Michelle Muir

Being gazelles in a land of sheepdogs,
we gambled about
until we were told our frolicking
aroused the flies.

As zebras in a country of lions,
we grazed quietly
until someone complained our stripes
clashed with the scenery.

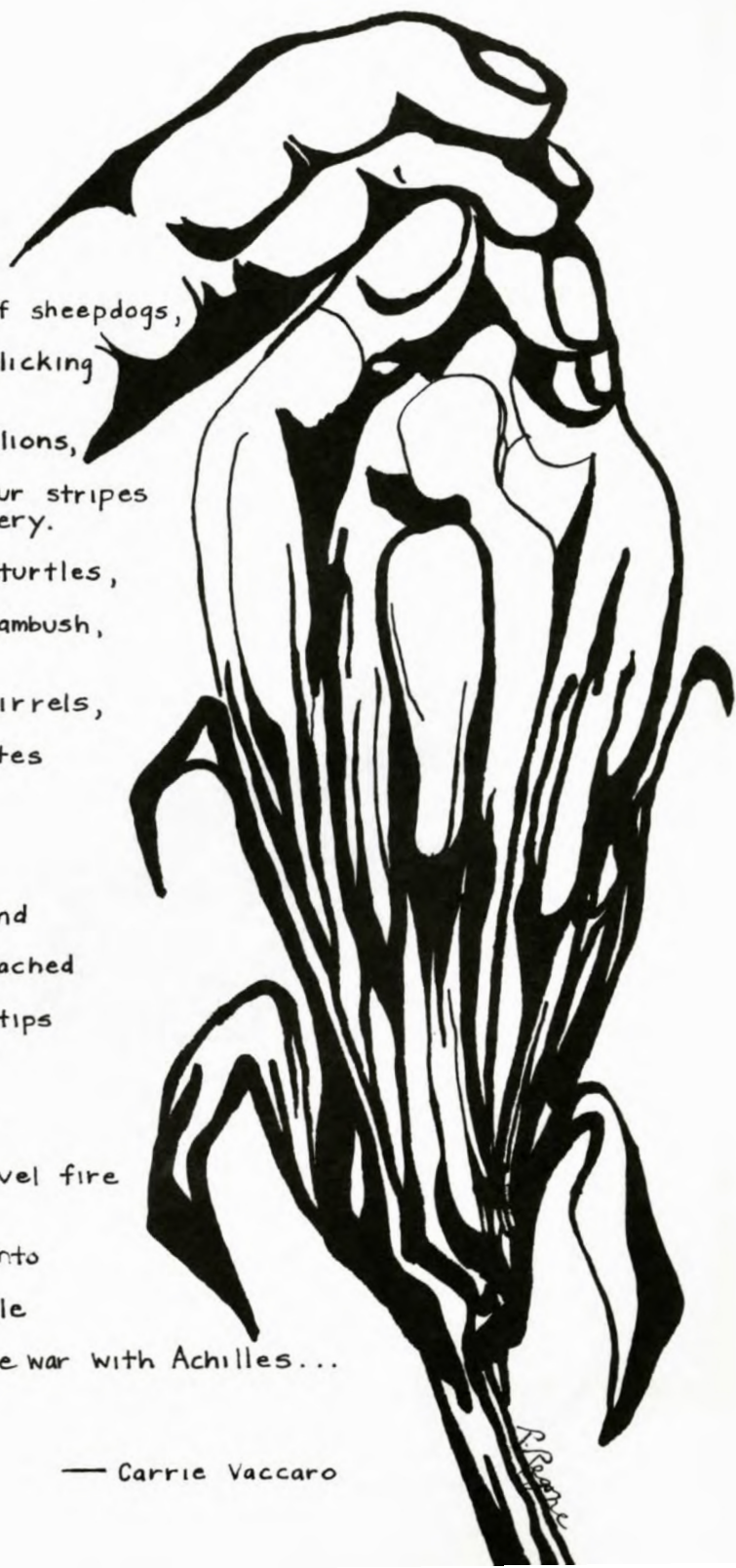
Sprinters on an island of turtles,
we ran side by side
until a snapper, lying in ambush,
tripped us.

Archers in a forest of squirrels,
we shot at the clouds,
until a battalion of termites
devoured our arrows.

Broken,
we trudged towards
the realm of Antiope,
the sun melting the days and
torching the sands;
through dry shimmers we reached
to touch the queen
and grasped our own fingertips
instead.

But symbols traced on
the dunes
pointed forward, and when
finally
we crawled through the gravel fire
to the top of the
ridge,
we slipped, tumbling not into
vision's eden
but into crimson battle

where, being Amazons in the war with Achilles...



thine
withered twigs of
aging
arms,
obscurely
gnarled in
knots.
Withing
arthritic
articulations
and painfully wrenched bent elbows—
bulbous
smooth
knobs bulging from
cornified bark-skin
surviving rampant
ragings of
winter's
winds.

SAMSON II

Snipping
Grating of steel on steel,
edge on edge
Cold metal against his neck
From his eyes to the floor
a million miles
Twin Towers to pavement
as the black waves crash
in slow motion
to the tiles

And he watches the mirror
Someone's reflection
shorn, naked, sheep without fleece
slips away, slinking down,
shivering,
wishing at least for a fig leaf.

—Carrie Vaccaro



VORTEX

It came in Summer, early before the deadening heat
scraping emptiness in metallic white
being spread and stretched: sucked
ripped tissues pus red
oozing upon scents of green
Scarring Abducting
Early in Summer it came and stayed suspended
in the mulky waves of sweat. The gulls

swarm over my father's boat. The pied piper
of dawn he curses the flying thieves and they caw
and he caws and it wakes me every morning. I watch
him sail away a silhouette in the rising sun.

what life is in me now?
it is hard
if ever I knew a god or a child
or the beach behind my family's cottage
to know

Plundered
contractions of whimpers and sighs
slow soft pleasure, wet voracious itch
takeme takeme takeme I am
a rythmed body taken
held taken held bursting
still coming - burst still come - burst
and am
watching the shadows of our hands circle an earlobe/
a navel/ a nipple/ a lip, licked softly cools
like melting ice

if ever I knew love
to know

I put a lot of sugar on my Cheerios and after
they get soggy and Porky Pig tells me th-th-th
that's all folks, run back to the kitchen and slurp them

down tickled to death
with each slow step
sand trickling in between
my toes and always silent

by that footprint washed away by waves:
my father never could see me pray for dusk
his bleak impression
black gliding to me from black

I will swim the ocean and beat it
I will I can keep bashing the
waves crashing the waves and breaking that line out-
there never wonder

oh beat the ocean
more than ever I want
to know beyond this shore
dive into sea's death
And emerge
no victim to watery unknowns

no please god to
run like the child I was
not in the maddened state
of womanhood that I am spinning
in narrowing circles:
birth and death so elusive yet they twist
like maggots in my soul

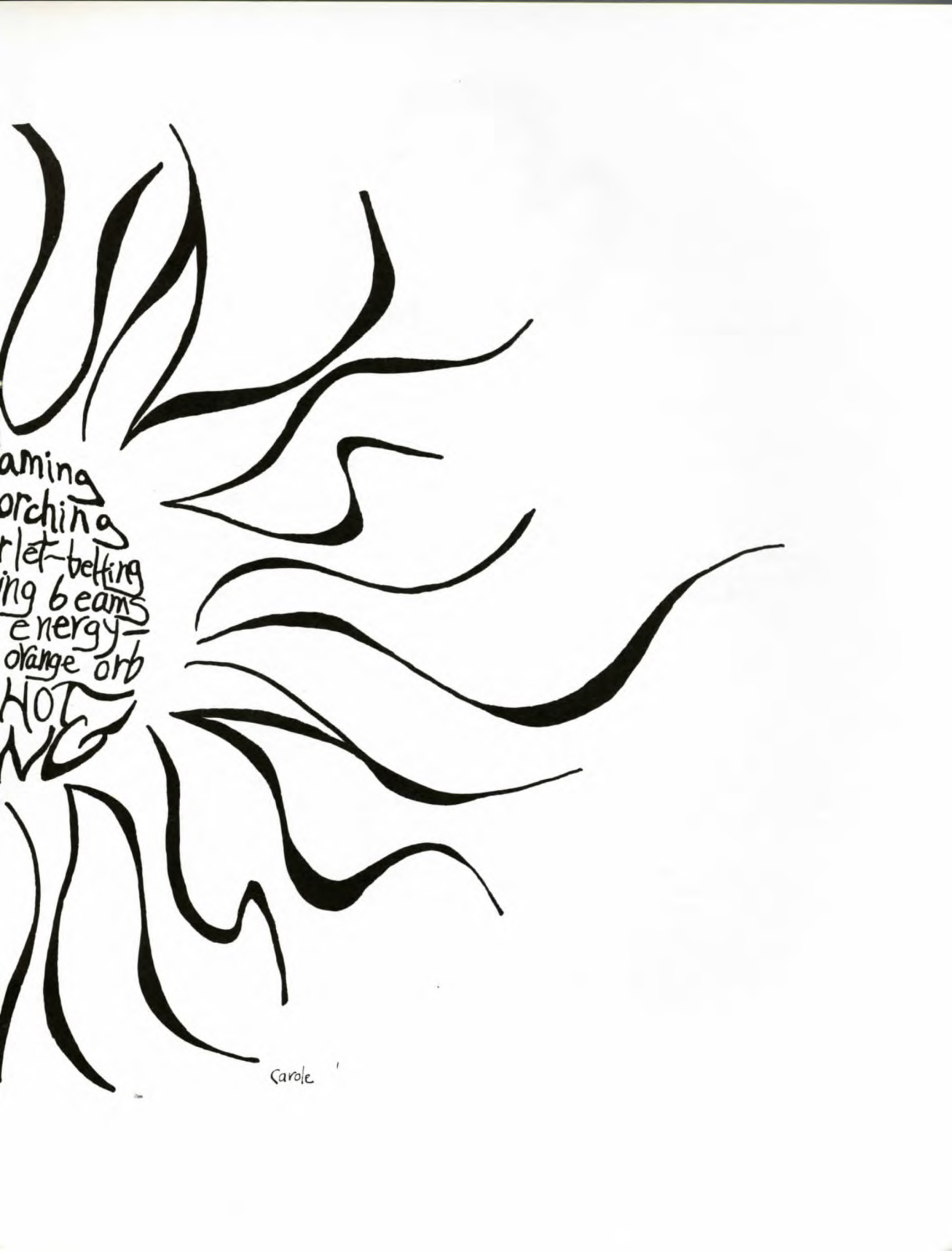
And it is Autumn and my body releases to the Chill /
And it is Autumn and my soul contracts to a Summer Sin
and waves never stop do they but between each crash
the sweat of that bed pours

into the sweat of that table

final and past
a life sucked into a vacuum
still and always
my soul a maelstrom in its vortex



—Theresa Maier

A stylized sun with wavy rays. The sun is represented by a central circle with several wavy lines radiating outwards, resembling flames or rays of light. The lines are black and have a fluid, organic quality. The sun is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page.

aming
orchina
rlet-belling
ing beams
energy-
orange orb
HOT
NO

Carole